THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

L. M. ZIMMERMAN

Price, 35 cents

THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

By L. M. ZIMMERMAN

Few people see more of life than the ministers. A minister who lives long enough, and who keeps his eyes open, has quite a story to tell about the varieties of human personality.

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THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

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The Preacher's Doorknob

By

LEANDER M. ZIMMERMAN

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CHAPTER 1

THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

DOORKNOBS are familiar to all. Even little children soon learn their use. All kinds of hands grasp doorknobs as people pass through many doors of many buildings each day.

The preacher's doorknob is no more sacred than any other. It is turned by all kinds of people, from the greatest and highest to the lowest and most humble. Of the busy pastor it may be said, as of the Lord, "In trouble they call upon thee."

It was Oliver Goldsmith who wrote of his loving father, a village preacher:

> His house was known to all the vagrant train,
> He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain;
> The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
> Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
> The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
> Claimed kindred there and had his claim allow'd.

As in Goldsmith's day, so it is today. The preacher *should* be one to whom people may

go in confidence in times of trouble. Many go to the physician or lawyer, not so much for medical or legal advice, but because their minds are burdened and they feel relieved when they can talk confidentially with one who will show an interest in them, and be willing to share their troubles.

No one should be better able to do this than the preacher. If he is endowed with understanding and a kind personality he should be the best sort of psychiatrist. His wide and varied experiences enable him to give wise and comforting counsel for the lessening of sorrow and the multiplying of joys.

If, indeed, more people went first to the pastor in their times of trouble, physical, mental, or legal, fewer would need to go elsewhere for counsel. *The counsels of the righteous availeth much.*

CHAPTER 2

HANDS ON THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

In view of my many years in the Christian ministry, there may be those who will be interested in reading of my experiences. I have labored especially among the poor and among life's derelicts. I have known of the heartaches, the hopes, and the spiritual achievements of many who had reached the crossroads to find that only stony pathways lay ahead.

I do not claim that my experiences vary to any marked degree from those of the average preacher. After all, the drama of life—in which there are parts for the rich and poor, the halt and lame, the successes and failures—is a mighty pageant enacted in the theater of time, with suns for lamps and eternity for a background. Each of us has his entrance and his exit. To the preacher it is given to play

a leading role in the unfolding of many scenes in this titanic pageant.

But to return to the immediate subject which it is my purpose to present: Happy people at weddings, sad people at funerals, impostors, professional beggars, the spurious child-burying gent, speculators who regard the preacher as an easy mark, the siren who uses her charms in a bogus appeal—all these appear in the seemingly endless range of scenes in which a preacher plays his part. It would require a tome of unusual proportions to set down all the events in detail. Having in mind a book of modest size, I shall confine myself to a limited number of the episodes which are high-lighted in my memory.

In the retired preacher's mental storehouse is a wealth of memories; memories of the world of might-have-been, of moral and spiritual achievement, of bleak, drab yesterdays of forlorn hope. As I look back on the yesterdays these memories strengthen my faith in the sublimity of a loving and eternal Father. God has been good to me.

CHAPTER 3

"THE PARDONED PRISONER" AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

He was a youngish man, whose hair appeared prematurely gray. His manner was that of one who was embarrassed. Penitence seemed to be writ large on his face. Would he come in and tell his story? . . . Seated in a comfortable chair, first he crossed one leg, then the other. Now he was at ease.

"Doctor," he began, in a soft, insinuating voice that reminded me of an actor leading up to his most dramatic scene, "I have just been pardoned from a term in prison. You preached in the prison one Sunday while I was serving my sentence. That sermon I shall never forget. Under its spell I was converted. Would that there were more men of the cloth with your power, your personality! For then, indeed, the world would be better."

I was beginning to think of the old proverb, "Beware of the Greeks offering gifts." My

"pardoned prisoner" was giving me a mighty thick coating of an unctious substance. Yet perhaps from vanity I was unwilling to misjudge his sincerity. But I *did* know what was coming.

"Doctor," he continued, "I have an aged mother back home in another state. The misdeed for which I have paid the penalty broke her heart. She is bedridden and penniless. I must somehow get back to her. I haven't the money to pay my fare. Won't you help me?"

The sad memories of his dear old mother impelled the "converted prisoner" to give a deep sigh as he brushed his eyes with a handkerchief in a seeming effort to keep back tears. I took a chance and gave him sufficient money to pay his way to the alleged dear old mother.

This occurred on a Monday morning preceding our regular preachers' meeting. In the course of the gathering, while telling our various experiences, I was mightily interested when one of the ministers with manifest pride told how a few days before a pardoned prisoner had confessed to him that he had been

converted by a sermon delivered by the speaker in the prison where he, the prisoner, was in duress. Concluding, the minister said, "One can never tell just when one's sermon is going to save a soul from sin and death."

Genuinely curious, I asked the minister to tell me something about the prisoner, his appearance, voice, mannerisms. My request was granted in detail. I then queried, "Did he ask for money?" "Yes," was the response, in a dawningly suspicious tone.

Now taking the lead, I said, "That man came to *my* door and tearfully asserted that he had been converted by *my* sermon." Uproars of laughter ensued as others told of the man's many "conversions" from sermons he had heard while a prisoner.

"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," saith the preacher.

CHAPTER 4

TRAMPS AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

RECALLING from the yesteryears' experiences with tramps, who are good customers at the preacher's doorknob, I am thinking of one who was rather genial and to whom it was often difficult to say *no*. He would at least respond, "Thank you kindly," and add a pleasant smile. I would not let him exceed me in courtesy, and would return his smile as he bowed and walked away.

One evening I met him some blocks from where I lived. He stopped, bowed, smiled, and said, "Doc, can you give me a nickel?"

Surprised at the small amount he asked for, I replied, "Why you are a cheap-John tonight. Here is ten cents."

He still had some manhood left, some sense of right and appreciation. Before I could say more, he allowed his better nature to appear as he said, "Doctor, don't give money to

tramps. They have your name down on Marsh Market Space, together with other names of those to whom they go for money."

"Good for you," I replied. "Give me back that dime and I will give you a quarter."

After we had made the exchange, with no protest on the part of my "customer," I said, "Now you go back to that place and have my name erased."

"I'll do it," was his prompt reply.

And he must have kept his promise, for although I had a dozen of this type of "customer" on my list before, I had very few afterward. And my erstwhile friend never came to me again for alms.

CHAPTER 5

A PRODIGAL AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

IT WAS a cold winter night. I had just returned from the midweek service. It so happened that the Sunday-school lesson for the following Sunday was the story of the Prodigal Son. It was my custom to speak at the midweek service on the lesson for the coming Sunday, to help the Sunday-school teachers. So the story of the Prodigal had been my theme.

As I stepped up to the street door of my residence, a young man greeted me and asked, "Reverend, would you be good enough to be a spiritual father to me, and give me a bit of your precious time?"

"Very glad to do so," I replied. "Come in and let us have fellowship together."

Once seated in my humble home, he appeared quite at ease. I said, "Now tell me your troubles. Perhaps I can help you."

It proved that he was the prodigal I had been speaking of. He told me he was a stranger in the city. Life back home had become humdrum, with no new or exciting happenings. He had yearned for freedom and a wider circle of acquaintances. His parents, he asserted, were "kind, simple people, but a bit Mid-Victorian in their life and habits." "And so," he continued, "I wanted to get away from mother's apron strings. I left home."

The end of the story was much like that of the prodigal's, for he soon found himself in want of money, friends, something to eat. But, he added, "I have learned my bitter lesson. I am through, and if God will forgive me, I will start life all over." Looking me squarely in the face, he asked, "Can you tell me what to do, and will you be a father to a prodigal son?"

I explained to him among other things that God is represented by the prodigal's father in the Bible story, and that God is only too glad to welcome home a wandering child.

He said gratefully, "Thank God, I do repent. I am truly sorry. I promise by His grace

and help to live a new life." Then we knelt in prayer. When we arose he clasped my hand and said, "You have been a father to me. God has forgiven me, for now I experience a peace I have never known before."

That young man entered a Bible school. He kept his promise to live a different life. Today he is a faithful servant of God. There was joy that night among the angels over the one sinner that repented.

CHAPTER 6

LED BY DISTRESS TO THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

ONLY yesterday evening there was a gentle knock on the door of my hotel room. Opening the door, I found a tearful mother, who had come to ask me to pray for her daughter who was ill in a near-by hospital.

Together we knelt and prayed, and when we arose, she said with a wistful smile, "I know now that my daughter will recover. I am sure your earnest appeal has been heard by God."

Every preacher, sooner or later, is visited by those who have loved ones ill in their homes or in hospitals. The object of these calls is to have the preacher pray for the restoration of the afflicted.

At such times people are likely to forget differences of denominationalism. What they want is someone in whom they can have confidence, someone whom they believe to be

sincere in his love of God and his fellow men.

In my long years in the ministry it was natural that many should know me. Irrespective of creed, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, called on me in times of stress. I always felt it a great compliment to be thus sought.

Yes, we would talk together and then pray. We would pray that, if it pleased God, Jesus might be the Great Physician, and restore the sick to health; that God Himself might inspire the physicians and nurses with such wisdom and skill as were needed for the occasion; and that to God be all the glory.

It was not simply an utterance of words. It was the earnest appeal, the belief and confidence in God and the power of prayer. And in more instances than one, it appeared that in the very hour we were praying, there was a change for the better in the sick one. God moves mysteriously. And, according to our faith, if we leave all with Him, He does for us at times things which pass our understanding.

CHAPTER 7

MARITAL TROUBLES AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

THE PREACHER is often called on to adjust marital troubles. Before he prescribes a remedy he must make a thorough diagnosis of each case and each patient. As a rule, if those involved are willing to give a little, and take a little, there is no necessity of upheaval.

Naturally some may ask, "What does an old bachelor know about prescribing for marriage difficulties?" And I reply that even a bachelor may acquire quite a fund of knowledge through careful observation.

The kind of marriage God ordained is a true partnership, in which each should live for the other and both for God. Marriage does not mean that one is to be "boss" and give orders. As a rule, I found in my experience, both husband and wife are somewhat at fault in every case of trouble. Both must

forgive and forget the many little differences which arise.

The desire to have what someone else has, and not to be able to get it, is often the beginning of dissatisfaction. The desire to spend the evenings in night clubs and cabarets, far from the true atmosphere of the home, may start the first breeze of home coolness.

But when I think of the many, many happy marriages—the many home-sweet-homes that have come within my purview through the years—the troubles I remember pale their uneffectual fires.

I remember "the wedding ring" story. The groom was a handsome youth, looking nervously to the right and left, adjusting his tie, fingering his vest. The bride's face was wreathed in a seraphic smile. The marriage ceremony had begun. The groom was told to place the ring—and this he did, but he placed it on his *own* finger.

Finally I said, "You will please say *I* and repeat after me . . ." But before I could utter the words to follow, he intoned in quavering voice, "You will please say *I* and repeat after me . . ."

I would not have been surprised to see the groom bolt for the nearest door, so thoroughly rattled had he become. But I whispered a few words to console him, and we finished without further accident. A happy marriage it proved to be. Many years have intervened since those two stood at the altar. But they are still "two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

CHAPTER 8

A CRITIC AT THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

SHE HAD come to get my signature to a petition for a position she was seeking at the City Hall. I had learned to know her through another woman, a member of my congregation at the time.

"Yes, I have heard you preach," she asserted by way of further introduction.

"I recall having seen you at several services," I agreed, adding, "I was wondering just why you stopped coming."

"Do you want me to be honest and tell you why?" she ventured, looking me squarely in the face. "Yes, go ahead, I want to know," was my anxious reply.

She began rather deliberately, saying, "I like a preacher who gets up in the pulpit and discusses the topics of the day. I don't want to hear about sin and repentance, stewardship, sacrifice. I want life, action."

"Then you do not wish to know about things Jesus preached," I ventured.

"No. What do I want to know about what happened a thousand years ago?" And then she concluded, "You speak so much about Jesus, and about holy living. We young people want a good time."

You may admire her frankness. But it would be pathetic to think that the reason many refuse to go to church is because in certain churches there is too much of the old-time religion. I do not believe that is so. I believe just the opposite, and my belief was tested in my own experience during the thirty-eight years of my ministry in a large city. It was because people's souls were fed that they filled the church, with 400 and 500 worshipers at the midweek services and 1,000 or more at the Sunday morning and evening services.

Bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That applies not only to children but to all who are received into membership in our churches. Such persons are all the more likely to bring forth, daily, fruits meet for repentance.

CHAPTER 9

THE SIREN AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

HER VOICE was soft and low, "an excellent thing in woman." She had been brought up in an atmosphere of luxury; culture and refinement were obvious. Having been graduated from a home college with high honors, her admiring and loving parents sent her to a finishing school in a distant city. Here she soon became a favorite among the students, and plunged into the social gaieties of the upper set with a gusto born of inexperience.

Reared in a godly home, she was as a bird freed from its cage while worldly temptations beset her on every hand. Wild parties followed fast and furious. On these occasions she was the life of the party. Her "dates" with young men were almost numberless.

Soon she found herself drifting almost unconsciously to the brink of that yawning

chasm from which there is seldom escape. Many at the school who formerly were her friends now shunned her. But—"On with the dance, let joy be unconfined!"

There followed, in the stillness of the night, periods of introspection and remorse. She tossed restlessly on her pillow. Sleep was denied her except under the influence of a strong potion. She was ashamed to go home —too proud to reveal her plight to those nearest and dearest to her. In her poignant grief she fled. She was now homeless, penniless . . .

The girl finished her story with an outbreak of sobs, at first low, then rising in crescendo. I was visibly affected, and spoke words of consolation to her. She left me with resigned assurance. On the morrow she would return. Meanwhile, I arranged to secure a temporary home for her. But she never came back.

My siren, I soon learned, had called on others with the same heartrending story. It was eventually disclosed that this luckless creature was merely a tool, a prisoner in the hands of a gang who preyed on young girls.

CHAPTER 10

SOME CHILDREN AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

YES, *some* children, for there is a great difference in children. Some of them, from their earliest years, find that their lives are under heavy mortgage placed by their parents and grandparents.

Two youngsters of the unfortunate class had frequently used my doorknob while I was in the active pastorate. One morning, desiring to know the cause of their repeated appeals, I went with them to their home for firsthand information. They were not of my creed or nationality but I was interested in them, as I have always been in all children.

Their home was in a crowded alley. I soon learned that their father was dead, and their mother worked in a factory for a pitiful wage. Taking the two, brother and sister, by the hand, we went to a near-by grocery. Here I bought for them supplies urgently needed.

Leaving the unfortunates with a "God bless you!" I gave myself up to some serious reflection. Suppose I had grown up under similar circumstances. What might my future have been? With similar environment, playmates, economic and social conditions, what might your future have been?

Who is to blame for what such people may become when they grow up? Are the children responsible, or are those living in affluence who are indifferent to the conditions under which many of our nation's future children are maturing?

Oh yes, these children have police protection. But it is not the protection of a big stick that such children need. They need the strong arms of a kind consideration, hearts of love, a decent place where they can breathe pure air and enjoy some of God's bounties.

Thank God, I did report the case to city officials, and an immediate change for the better took place. But to rear children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" requires more than a mighty city government.

CHAPTER 11

CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

It was Christmas Eve. Snow had begun to fall in heavy, blinding flakes. The wind had a mournful sound. Looking from a window of my study, I could see ghostly shadows, reflections from the electric lights, silhouetted on the buildings across the street. Here and there a pedestrian with head bent low groped his way; an unruly night, indeed.

As I turned from the window and seated myself in a comfortable chair, I offered a silent prayer to the Most High. Not for myself—for was I not already thrice-blessed in having warm, cozy quarters on so miserable a night? My prayer was a fervent appeal for those who were homeless, penniless, hungry; for those who faced only a bleak, cheerless yuletide on the morrow.

My supplication ended, I sat in silent meditation for a while. Then—a ring at my door-

bell. As I descended the stairs to answer, I wondered who would venture forth on such a night to visit me. Why, bless my soul, there were at least two dozen of them. And familiar to me were all their faces. They were laden with bundles of all kinds, and baskets practically groaning with a wealth of provisions. When I regained my composure, I invited my visitors to come in.

"But what in the world does all this mean!" I cried in amazement.

Declining to answer, the Christmas Eve revelers crowded into my apartment. Bustling around, seats were finally found for all. Two of the group, a young man and a young woman, had brought violins. At a given signal the sweet tones of the violins were heard in unison. "Silent Night" was their theme. All in the room took up the refrain in low and solemn tones. At the conclusion of the carol I was asked to pray for guidance of all in every land and clime.

Following my prayer, a spokesman for the spiritual-minded revelers rose and said:

"Doctor, please do not think for a moment

that the provisions we have brought here are intended for you. Not by a jugful! They have been brought in the knowledge that you will have them distributed tomorrow among those whom you hold dearer than life itself. God bless you, Doctor. That blessing, we know, will be re-echoed in the hearts of many more."

Chimes in the distance now proclaimed the hour of midnight. Christmas morn! And what a happy morning it was for me! My humble prayer had been answered. In my delight I cried with Dickens, "A merry Christmas, friends. And God bless us every one!"

My friends had now departed. As they passed into the snow-covered street their voices re-echoed on the midnight air, "Silent night, holy night." The true spirit of Christmas was indeed within them.

CHAPTER 12

A "LOST" SON AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

My dinner finished, I was prepared for a short stroll when the doorbell rang. My caller was a young man, of slight figure, fairly well dressed. He spoke excellent English in modulated tones. A hasty appraisal of him left no doubt in my mind that he had been reared in a refined environment.

"Doctor," he said hesitatingly, "this is my first experience in asking for assistance. I know that you are a busy man, so I shall be brief in telling you my story. I bought considerable stock on margin, and the Wall Street crash has left me penniless. This would not have crushed me; I should have fought on. But I have been struck a heavier blow, which has left only hopelessness and darkness within me. Yesterday while playing in the street my only son, whom I loved more dearly than life itself, was struck and killed by a hit-and-run

driver. I have no money with which to pay the expenses of his funeral.

"Only a loving parent could realize the horror and pity and despair that are mine. I appeal to you, a humane man, to help me in my darkest hour. And I swear to you that the money will be returned as soon as I can recoup my fortunes."

To say that I was deeply touched is to state a simple truth. I asked my caller some questions. They were answered convincingly. I suggested that we kneel in prayer. Then I gave him enough money for immediate needs. He was to call the next day. Meanwhile I got in touch with several persons to whom he referred me. None of these knew him or had ever heard of him. Later inquiries further afield revealed undoubtedly that he was an impostor, *sans* son, *sans* wife.

Just another well-meant gesture on my part, that I have set down in the debit column of my experiences.

CHAPTER 13

A "LOST WALLET" AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

I HAD just stepped into the street when I was accosted by a well-dressed man carrying a suitcase. He was accompanied by a young woman who bore in her arms a child who was perhaps a year old.

"Pardon me, sir, for addressing you who are a perfect stranger to me. A few days ago I lost my job, through no fault of mine. My wife and I thought I might find employment in this city. We arrived here about an hour ago. The first thing we did was to try to find a respectable lodginghouse.

"About fifteen minutes ago I discovered that my pocketbook was missing. Whether I lost it or whether my pocket was picked, I do not know. We are in an awful predicament. I have only about fifty cents in my pocket. We have no place to go. Besides, our baby needs medical attention immediately. Won't you,

sir, be good enough to lend us several dollars? I assure you the loan will be returned as soon as I get work. You really don't know how embarrassing this is to us."

Meanwhile his companion stood by, mute, dejected. She raised a handkerchief to her eyes and was apparently wiping away vagrant tears.

"Have you no friends or acquaintances in this city?" I asked.

"None," was the quick response.

I was about to reach for my wallet when the voice of experience interposed. "The story doesn't seem to ring true," it seemed to say, "It's a racket."

"I'm sorry," I said. "You have my deepest sympathy." And I passed on.

After walking about half a block I halted and turned to take a last glance at the couple. Another pedestrian had been halted. After a few moments he gave them a "helping hand." I retraced my steps and followed the pair at a distance. In the course of a half-hour ten individuals had been approached. Seven of these responded to the "touching" appeal.

CHAPTER 14

THE OLD PEDDLER AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

AN UNUSUAL character was the old peddler. I had come to know him well. Every Monday morning he was at my door. Chewing gum, chocolates, pins, needles, cotton, shoestrings, gadgets of various kinds—almost endless seemed his assortment. With a smile and a courteous bow, his invariable salutation was, "Good morning, my good friend. Can I be of any service to you today?"

An ascetic was my peddler friend. He stood erect. His complexion was as clear and rosy as that of a young woman emerging from the beauty shoppe. He beamed with all the radiance of a man floating into a pleasant haven on a warm, caressing tide; an obvious contradiction, I grant you, in an ascetic. But as I have said, this was an unusual character.

To those who had not gained the confidence of my friend, he was austere, distrustful, but

always polite. He lived up to his own philosophy punctiliously. That philosophy was "do unto others as ye would that they should do to you."

A strange, sad life had been the peddler's. Born in a European country, surrounded by wealth, reared in an atmosphere of culture, he had been given every educational advantage. It was his father's aim that he study for the priesthood. But that was not to be. A revolution in his native country swept away the family fortune. His father was killed; his mother died of the shock. The young count—for he was a count in his own right—became embittered toward mankind.

An only son, with no home ties left, he fled from his country. In time he reached the United States. Here he could have received aid from his own loyal countrymen who had begun life anew in this mecca of democracy. But pride and resentment burned fiercely within him. He shrank from his countrymen. An ascetic he became in the true sense of the word.

"Good morning, my good friend. Can I be

of any service to you today?" Yes, he could be of service. Call on me again! Which, many times, he did. I gained his confidence. One day he consented to enter my study. It was on one of these visits that he told me his story. Having unburdened himself, he suddenly became radiant. The real beauty and depth of life had unfolded before him. A red-blooded, warmhearted man he became. God *does* move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform!

One morning I missed the old peddler from his accustomed rounds. I was disappointed but not alarmed. He would come the next week. Two weeks elapsed. He called no more. Cold in death he was found in his modest lodginghouse room. Clutched in his outstretched hand was a note. It read:

"Good morning, my good friend. Can I be of any service to you today?"

CHAPTER 15

THE OLD ACTOR AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

A STRANGE CHARACTER was the old actor, Eldritch, and eerie he was. Tall, gaunt, hollow-cheeked, with flowing knotted tie and silvered hair, he looked as if he had just stepped forth from some ancient Runic tome or palimpsest. His eyes were dark and piercing, reflecting a weird brilliance. He had passed the youth of old age.

As my Thespian visitor began to unfold his tale, I sat rapt, tense. The fire of youth was in him. He had traveled over all the civilized world. Sovereigns of distant lands had bade him give performances before their courts. Thrice he had appeared at the White House by special request. He had acted with all the great tragedians and tragediennes of the past —Junius Brutus Booth, Edwin Booth, Barrett McCullough, Bernhardt, Kemble. But age could not wither him nor custom stale his

infinite variety. Suddenly he arose and in resonant tones declaimed from Shakespeare:

I have touched the highest point of all my greatness:
And, from that full meridian of my glory,
I haste now to my setting; I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more.

Then he switched to Robert Burns:

Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right;
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn;
Then Age and Want—oh, ill-match'd pair—
Show man was made to mourn.

He sat down. His voice was trembling, his body a-quiver. Thus he remained, head held between his hands, for several minutes. Now he was regaining normal composure. Straightening himself up, he looked me steadily in the eyes:

"Doctor," he said, "why have I come to you this evening? I do not seek alms. I do not seek spiritual advice. I do not seek sympathy. No,

but there is an invisible, intangible something that has impelled me hither tonight. That something is the magnetic drawing together of two great minds that have arrived at the same philosophy.

"That philosophy is the unfolding of life in its higher, more beautiful aspects. I depict the story from the stage. You tell it from the pulpit and in the byways. The same ultimate ending we have in mind. The only difference is that we travel roads that are widely separated."

His story ended, the old actor rose with a courtly bow and left me. Strange, passing strange, I mused. What *really* brought him to me? He gave me his name, which I had never heard before. For several days following I pondered the story of my friend the tragedian.

Picking up a newspaper one morning, I ran across his name, an assumed name it was. He was a psychopath, and had escaped from a sanatorium.

CHAPTER 16

A "REFORMED" SINNER AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

IT WAS at the close of a Sunday evening service when a semi-intoxicated man, bearing on his face the marks of dissipation, walked unsteadily up the aisle and stood before me. Giving me a quizzical, hesitating look, he said:

"Parson, I was passing by when I heard the sweet peals of the organ, and the choir singabout the 'Ninety-and-Nine' and about the lost sheep. I wanted to hear more, so I came in and took a seat on the rear bench. I heard your sermon. You sure hit the ball hard; made me feel as if I must start out at once hunting lost sheep. Suddenly I realized that I had found my sheep; it is myself.

"I have been a wicked man, parson. My money for years has been spent on booze, while my wife and kiddies have often gone hungry and been dressed in rags. But no more.

From now on I'm turning over a new leaf. The rum mills will get no more of my coin. God bless you, parson!"

Before I could express my delight at his avowal of coming into the fold, the "rescued sheep" had gone. How happy I was to think that an all-wise Omnipotence had heard my fervent appeal.

Several years intervened. One Sunday morning at the close of the service a portly, fashionably-garbed man approached and grasped my hand.

"So glad to have you with us," I said.

"Don't know me, do you, parson? Thought not. I'm the fellow who dropped in on you one Sunday night a few years ago when you were preaching on the 'Ninety-and-Nine.' I've kept my word—never tasted liquor since. I own my home, have a fine automobile, and a snug bank account. And all this I owe to you."

"Wonderful," I beamed. "May I ask what business you are engaged in?"

"Sure," he returned with an obviously proud smile. "Running a high-toned saloon of my own, where other suckers pay the bills."

CHAPTER 17

A "SALESMAN" AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

PASSING ALONG a street in the congested business district, I was approached by a man whom I knew casually. His attire was faultless, his manner that of a modern Beau Brummell. His softly modulated tones showed undoubtedly that he was well educated. He talked with an easy assurance calculated to allay suspicion.

Yet there was something in him that made me cautious. His eyes were shifty, the corners of his mouth gave evidence of harshness, if not cruelty.

"Doctor Zimmerman, I believe," he ventured. "Just the man I wanted to see. I know of your tireless work in behalf of life's unfortunates. And a grand work it is. As a matter of fact, a great deal of my time is devoted to similar labor. But it is *sub rosa*. I do not believe in letting my right hand know what my

left hand is doing. This very hour I am on a mission of humaneness. Of this you will approve, I am sure.

"Doctor, I am selling a few shares of stock for an organization that is as solid as the rock of Gibraltar. This organization is run by wealthy men who receive no profit from the sale of the stock. The proceeds are devoted entirely to philanthropy. I am sure you will wish to help in this noble cause."

Here he began to unfold a portfolio containing his "rock of Gibraltar" stock. At this point a second man stepped up.

"Hel-*lo*, Frank," he blurted with rare enthusiasm. "Been hunting for you all morning. Pardon my intrusion," he said, turning to me. Then resuming conversation with Frank, he asked,

"Have you any shares of the stock left? I have immediate sale for twice your allotment."

Here I was duly introduced to Frank's friend.

"Just a moment, Bill," said Frank. "Doctor Zimmerman, I am certain, will want the shares

I have. But if the good doctor overlooks this golden opportunity, then someone else will be the lucky person."

Before I could answer, Frank began to withdraw his precious stock. Meanwhile, Bill looked on with downcast expression.

"Wait a minute," I interjected at this juncture in the swift-moving proceedings. "We cannot conclude this business in the street. Let's go somewhere and sit down to discuss the matter privately."

This suggestion was quickly approved by Frank and Bill.

"Where shall we go, Doctor?" asked Frank.

"Gentlemen, I have some excellent friends only a few minutes' walk distant. I am absolutely sure they will be glad to subscribe not only to this but to any additional stock that you may have to offer."

"Fine!" blurted Frank and Bill in unison.

So we started to the headquarters of my friends. When we had reached the Central Police Station I invited them to enter. But Frank and Bill suddenly called it a day and hastened in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER 18

A "FRIEND" AND THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

IT WAS a crisp autumn morning. The sun shone brightly from a cloudless sky. Exhilarated by the prospective pleasure of a drive through the country, I had just stepped into my coupe when a tattered and disheveled knight of the old school sidled up to the door. Then—

"Good mornin', guvner. How about givin' a friend a lift?"

"Where are you headed?" I asked.

"N'York. N'York, guv."

"Well, I'll chaperone you about twenty-five miles in that direction. Hop in."

We had passed through the city and out into the open spaces when my "friend" reached into the inside pocket of his coat and brought out a pint bottle of "smoke." Proffering it to me, he said:

"To show my appreciation of what you're

doin' for me, guv, take this. Drink it—it'll do you good."

I smilingly but firmly declined.

"You hurt my feelin's, guv. Now I'll have to drink it myself," said my good friend with an air of injured innocence.

Suiting action to words, he lifted the bottle to his lips and took a long and loving swig. The "shot" had an electrifying effect. My friend became loquacious.

"Guv, you wouldn't take me for a millionaire, would you?" he asked.

I told him that he had guessed correctly.

"Well, you're wrong," he quickly returned. "I'm very, *very* wealthy. I own nearly all the property around Times Square in N'York. And I have fifteen big apartment houses on Riverside Drive. Besides, I am chairman of the board of a big steel corporation in Pittsburgh. Just been paying a social visit to Andy Carnegie over there. Andy insisted on my returning home in his private car, but I told him I had decided to see nature again firsthand, and would walk.

"Now guv, you're wonderin' why I'm togged

out in these modest clothes. I put 'em on so none of my millionaire pals would recognize me and ask embarrassin' questions. Tonight I'll have on my soup-and-fish and dine at the Waldorf-Astoria."

We had now reached the end of my journey. I told my friend that this was where we parted company.

"Guv, are you a good friend of mine?" queried my companion.

"Sure!"

"All right, then. Just keep on goin' till you get to N'York," was his modest order.

I assured him that my immediate appointment would not permit of the time. Slowly he alighted from the car. Running his hands through his pockets, he gave a dejected look.

"Guv," he said, "I've misplaced my checkbook. I'll need a couple bucks before I get home. Just give me your name and address, and I'll send you a check in return pronto."

As he disappeared in the distance I sat and wondered. On his way—where?

CHAPTER 19

THE PREACHER USING HIS OWN DOORKNOB

THE WRITER, when he started his work as a home missionary in Baltimore, determined by the grace of God to wear out soles in his endeavor to save souls. From early morning until often quite late at night he searched for "the lost sheep" until he found them.

"Come in and break bread with us," said a father as I called one evening. I accepted the invitation. There was real fellowship among us in that home, which later resulted in that family and their relatives becoming faithful members of the church.

A preacher must use his own doorknob, turning it from the inside as he starts out to visit the doors of others. Opportunity often knocks at the preacher's door. Usually, however, it is with the preacher as with all others who would succeed in their work; he must achieve success by going after it.

The Preacher's Doorknob

The mere advertisement that a minister resides at such and such a place, and preaches in a given church, is not sufficient. Be he ever so great a preacher, he cannot expect to continue for many years in one parish unless he knows the needs of his parishioners by knocking at their doors.

There are always those in the congregation who need pastoral attention in their homes. Among these are the sick and the troubled. The telephone is useful in reaching them, but it can never be a substitute for pastoral visits. Personal contacts, prayerful fellowship, sharing of people's sorrows, have wonderful effect in binding together hearts in Christian love and in sealing them all the more firmly with the heart of God Himself.

The clasp of the hand, the sympathetic glance, the gracious expression, all these make more effective the preaching of God's Word from the pulpit on the Lord's Day.

Jesus, who spoke as never man spoke, went out among the people. His own doorknob was kept polished by the frequent grasp of His own hand.

The Preacher Using His Own Doorknob

There is often a real healing in the pastor's visits to the sick. He points the patient to the Great Physician, who heals us of our diseases. By awakening faith, confidence, and trust, many are the more readily restored to health. "Comfort one another," is the divine command, and words of such comfort often prove a healing power.

CHAPTER 20

DOORKNOB OF THE PREACHER'S BOYHOOD HOME

OVER THE doorway of the country home in which I was born more than eighty years ago my father had painted the words, "In God We Trust." Day by day as we children passed through that door our eyes instinctively were lifted up to those words.

Long since, the old homestead, with its wealth of hallowed memories, has gone. But even though it has been engulfed in the misty yesterdays, along with its motto, God is still here. In all the intervening years I have unfailingly put my trust in Him. And never has that trust been in vain.

While we were yet children we learned the meaning of faith. My mother was my first teacher. She read to us parts of the Bible which made plain to me that God is our Father. His Fatherhood was made so real to me that very early in life I was conscious of

His personality and ever since then my fellowship and communion with Him have been my greatest joy. My early faith was awakened and inspired by my mother, so that I had great love for God, and that love has given me a peace the world can neither give nor take from me.

Our parents played with us, sacrificed for us, denied themselves things that they might educate us. They also taught us the meaning of obedience and proper discipline. And above all they were concerned about our spiritual lives, reading lessons from God's Word, and kneeling with us in prayer. Thus they brought us up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

During my active pastorate I have been able to observe much of both the proper fulfillment and the neglect of the duties of parents toward their offspring. How important these duties are!

How blessed it is to be taught in childhood to trust in One whose mercies are new to us every morning and every evening. Having been a great sufferer in a hospital for six

weeks, and daily growing weaker, nigh unto death, I never once failed to trust God. All the while it seemed I heard Him say, "I will. Be thou clean." God could not come and cut out the deadly mastoid tumor. I was rushed from one hospital to another, where a surgeon quickly performed the operation, and relief came with its cleansing and healing. Then I appreciated what was meant when I heard God saying to me, "I will. Be thou clean." He wanted all the while to bring relief, and with the co-operation of the surgeon, the nurses, and others, my prayers were answered.

Yes, "In Thee, O God, do I put my trust."

CHAPTER 21

GOD'S USE OF A RETIRED PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

AFTER HAVING long been a servant of God in the pulpit and in pastoral work, the author was stricken with a heart ailment. But he was unwilling to see his congregation die because of his own failing health. He decided to resign, while the congregation was at its zenith both spiritually and financially.

For thirty and eight years he had served his one and only church. He was then sixty-five years old. Many gave him only six months more to live. But God sometimes plans things differently from the way we expect. He was good enough to make further use of His servant; restored him to health after an eighteen-month rest, and has been making use of the retired pastor's doorknob ever since.

The author has been allowed to write the following books: *The Gospel Minister,* of which 4,000 copies were published; *Shepherd-*

ing of Souls, 5,000 copies; *Mellow Fruits of Experience,* 20,000 copies; *Prayers,* 17,000 copies. Total, 46,000 copies of books.

He wrote 178 poems, which were printed in groups each year and distributed through various church organizations throughout the country in quantities from 80,000 to 139,000, totalling 1,089,000 in ten years.

Yes, "Behold I stand at the door and knock" is the divine declaration. If we open the door the Lord will enter and assign us duties if we are truly willing to be used, willing to make sacrifices, willing to do what God wants us to do.

There is yet work for a retired pastor to do. When others see that we retired ministers have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him, they are ready to come for information, guidance, peace, comfort, hope, and God's grace.

This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith in God.

CHAPTER 22

JUST PASSING BY THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB

ONLY THE preacher himself knows what it means at the end of a hard day to have good friends call on him, with smiles to help lift shadows that may be hovering. Just stop in, as you are passing by, and tell the preacher of the good you see in the things he is endeavoring to do.

Sing a few praises to the discouraged leader and see how it cheers him. It will encourage him to preach better sermons, to do better work in general.

Go not to talk over troubles, past, present, or those imaginary future ones that may never come. But tell him what true religion means to you, and how thankful you are for the privilege of serving God in the church. Remind your pastor of some particular sermon he preached that greatly helped you, of some visit he made to a family in a time of sick-

ness or bereavement that left an imprint of blessing.

The preacher, like other mortals, has his days of sunshine, and also days when troubles appear to chase each other like drab clouds. Fate at times deeply wounds his generous heart. The preacher often needs encouragement. And be sure you will feel yourself to be a better and happier Christian for having turned the preacher's doorknob.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

It is quite in keeping with American tradition that the pastor of a great city church should have been brought up in a farmhouse and educated in a country school. These are the facts in the story of Leander M. Zimmerman.

The Zimmerman parents, Henry and Leah, had a 260-acre farm near Manchester, Maryland, and there Leander was born on August 29, 1860. He was the seventh son of a seventh son, and therefore of course he was destined for a unique career.

Book learning was acquired at the cost of long daily trudges in those years before school buses; and young Zimmerman had his three-mile walk each day to and from the little red schoolhouse. In those early days of his life his mother had a dream for him in her heart, as mothers do; she kept her son constantly aware of her deep desire that he prepare for the ministry.

In the fall of 1878 Leander Zimmerman enrolled in the preparatory school of Gettys-

burg College, in Pennsylvania, and was graduated from the college in the class of 1884. He continued his studies for three years in the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, and was ordained to the ministry following graduation in 1887.

The Lutheran Board of Home Missions was then planning to organize a congregation in South Baltimore. Young Pastor Zimmerman was the fortunate choice of the board for this work. What happened in Baltimore from the time of Pastor Zimmerman's arrival on the field, December 1, 1887, is a thrilling "success story."

It took Pastor Zimmerman two weeks to make a thorough canvass of his field. By December 18 he had gathered enough people to hold services in a hall. Attendances were large from the beginning. The missionary did not wait passively for churchgoers to come to the mission, but went in search of those who did not belong to any church.

During that first year the tireless young pastor made about four thousand visits to those in spiritual need. At the services in

Christ Church on Sunday mornings and evenings during that year attendances averaged 206. The mission was self-supporting by the end of the year. A church property was secured, and from year to year enlargements of the building were needed. At one Good Friday afternoon service the record attendance of 2,104 was registered.

Christ Church grew to be one of Baltimore's strongest congregations. But Pastor Zimmerman's ministry rapidly outgrew the limits of his own congregation. His influence was felt throughout the city. He became known as the friend of all who needed aid: the beggar, drunkard, wayward son or wayward daughter, and all sorts of derelicts of the underworld.

The public opinion of Dr. Zimmerman's ministry in Baltimore was clearly expressed when he celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as pastor of Christ Church. Men prominent in public life, including Theodore Roosevelt, then president, sent their congratulations. Leaders in communions other than Dr. Zimmerman's, including Cardinal Gibbons and

Archbishop Ryan, were among those who gave their recognition of work well done.

When Dr. Zimmerman finally retired as pastor of Christ Church, in 1925, the whole city felt that it had suffered a great loss. Thirty-eight years the faithful pastor had served one congregation, which he called his "bride." He never had another.

Retirement has by no means been the end of Dr. Zimmerman's work. Through his constant writings, counseling, and particularly on account of his remarkable genius for sympathetic and encouraging friendship, he has continued his ministry.

Dr. Zimmerman has been of great service to the Lutheran Church, as one of those organizing the Baltimore Motherhouse for the training of deaconesses, on the board of an orphans' home and of a theological seminary, and as a delegate to many of the general church conventions.

G. E. R.

The Author

Dr. Leander M. Zimmerman has kept busy in the years since his retirement from the active ministry in writing little books which have had a surprisingly wide circulation.

His little volume, *Prayers,* went through seventeen printings. He has also written and published numerous little gift volumes of poems, which have found their way into countless hands.

His book, *Mellow Fruits of Experience,* tells much of the story of his ministry.

He has maintained his personal friendship with thousands of people, who have responded to his warm-hearted helpfulness and unselfishness.

BOOKS

by Dr. Leander M. Zimmerman

THE PREACHER'S DOORKNOB 35 cents

A delightful, a charming little book, filled with whimsical humor and kindly sympathy. It presents the drama of life as a minister sees it.

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